



# Flood Control District of Maricopa County

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## **Crossing a Flooded Wash: A Deadly Choice**

*No Vehicle is Large Enough, No Reason Good Enough to Try to Cross a Wash*

On July 14, 2012 a Wickenburg man died as he attempted to drive his full-size Chevy SUV across a flooded wash during a day of heavy rainfall. The vehicle overturned in the churning water and debris, and was dragged for a quarter mile before coming to rest in a stand of trees. During the same weekend storm, other drivers were rescued from washes near Wittmann and in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

"There is absolutely no safe reason to cross a flooded wash or road," said Max Wilson, chairman of the Flood Control District of Maricopa County Board of Directors. "Even driving a large, heavy vehicle like a truck or SUV does not protect you from injury or even death."

Our message is simple: Never Cross a Flooded Wash or Road — period.

Two inches of flowing water can sweep a person off their feet and just six inches of water can cause a vehicle to float. No street-legal vehicle is designed to withstand the power of rushing water. In Maricopa County, people have attempted to cross a flooded wash with everything from a pickup truck pulling a horse trailer to a backhoe machine. Moreover, even if the water is not moving, it is impossible to gauge the actual depth of the water simply by looking at the water surface, or determine if the roadway underneath has been washed away.

Of equal concern is that people continue to cross flooded washes with the mindset, "I've driven across this wash before so I can do it again." At some point this complacency will catch up to these folks when they appear in a TV news video being rescued from the roof of their submerged car or, worse yet, they become another fatality statistic.

Each year, more deaths occur nationally due to flooding than from any other severe weather-related hazard. According to the National Weather Service, 103 persons died in flood-related events in 2011 in the United States. Of those victims, 63% were driving a vehicle. Another 15% fell into floodwater while walking or standing near a flooded wash or river.

If the road ahead of you is flooded, turn your vehicle around and find a safer route or wait until the floodwater has completely receded. If floodwater is filling the wash near your home, don't stand on the banks to watch it. Never put yourself in a wash or dry riverbed as a storm is approaching, as water can rush down the wash in an instant in a flash flooding situation.

Don't be a statistic. Protect yourself and your family. Respect the power of water during Arizona's monsoon season and winter rains. Be Flood Smart!

**For more flood safety information**, visit [www.fcd.maricopa.gov](http://www.fcd.maricopa.gov).  
**For information about the Turn Around Don't Drown® program**, visit  
<http://tadd.weather.gov/tadd-intro.shtml>.